

Paul—Acts 23

Before the Sanhedrin; The Conspiracy; Sent to Caesarea

I. Additional Scriptures/Notes...

- 01. Chapter 23...** “Had Paul not been harassed so by the Jews, we would not have the magnificent defenses that are recorded in the book of Acts. These ancient enemies of Christianity, therefore, unwittingly rendered us a great favor. The apostle looked steadfastly (with riveted gaze) upon the council (perhaps an informal gathering), probably surveying the semicircle of dignitaries to detect whether he might recognize some old cronies from his earlier years as a persecutor. They listened with jaded attention” [Wayne Jackson, *The Acts of the Apostles: from Jerusalem to Rome*, p. 309].
- 02. 23:1... I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day**—“Paul repeatedly affirmed that he had always maintained a good conscience in the sight of God (1 Cor. 4:4), even declaring that "from his forefathers" he had worshiped God with a pure conscience (2 Tim. 1:3). This "is an unanswerable argument against the oft-repeated theory" that all religious actions are right, just so long as one is sincere in what he does” [Coffman].

II. Chronology.

BIBLE PERIOD: **The Period of the Church.**

III. Summary.

This chapter reveals Paul’s speech before the Sanhedrin in which there is some excitement as he unknowingly rebuked the High Priest who actually had broken the law. Paul apologized. The difference in the two major Jewish sects was used by Paul in his defense. He knew well the two doctrines and the points at which they were divided. Because some of those before whom Paul stood were fellow Pharisees a division became obvious between the representatives of the two sects. The scene actually became quite unruly and the Roman soldiers, under the direction of the chief captain whisked Paul away. He was told by the Lord that he would visit Rome. Paul’s nephew learned about a plot of the Jews to kill Paul and he came with that message to Paul. Paul was able to have the young man tell his news to the chief captain and immediate action was taken to prevent the murder of Paul. Paul was taken with a heavily armed escort to Caesarea to be held.

IV. Outline.

1. As Paul stands before the council, he rebukes Ananias (Acts 23:1-5).
2. Paul announces his background as a Pharisee and relates it to the charges now brought against him (6).
3. Paul’s announcement splits asunder the council regarding his guilt (7-9).
4. Paul is rescued by the chief captain (10).
5. Paul is told he will bear witness at Rome (11).
6. The Jews plot to kill Paul (12-15).
7. The plot is discovered and made known (16-22).
8. Paul is taken to Caesarea (23-35).

V. Questions.**True or False**

01. _____ Paul stood before the council and told them he had never done any wrong.
02. _____ The chief captain at Jerusalem considered Paul to be worthy of death.
03. _____ The Pharisees and Sadducees had some doctrinal differences.
04. _____ The name of the chief captain who protected Paul is not given.
05. _____ Paul's nephew was treated disrespectfully as he tried to warn about the Jews' plot against Paul.

Multiple Choice (Select the BEST Answer)

06. _____ Why did the chief captain send Paul STRAIGHTWAY to Felix: (a) Felix asked him to; (b) he had learned of a Jewish plot; (c) he feared a riot would break out.
07. _____ The word WIST in verse 5 means: (a) knew; (b) wished; (c) saw.
08. _____ What position did Felix occupy: (a) king; (b) magistrate; (c) governor.
09. _____ The Jews who sought to kill Paul vowed to give up what till they had killed Paul: (a) food; (b) sleep; (c) a & b.
10. _____ When Paul's nephew was let go by the chief captain, what was he charged: (a) to go along with Paul; (b) to tell no one the chief captain had been informed; (c) nothing.

Fill in the Blanks

11. **...God shall _____ thee, thou _____: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and _____ me to be smitten _____ to the law?**
12. _____ was the place Paul was kept at Caesarea.
13. **...Be of _____, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in _____ so must thou bear _____ also at _____.**
14. Paul left Jerusalem at ____:____ p.m. accompanied by _____ soldiers, ____ horsemen, and _____ spearmen, heading for Caesarea.
15. More than 40 men were ready to _____ Paul.

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week's handout

ANSWERS to Acts 22 Questions... [(1) True, Acts 22:28; (2) True, Acts 22:4; (3) False, Acts 22:22-23; (4) False, Acts 22:10; (5) True, Acts 22:14; (6) b, Acts 22:30; (7) c, Acts 22:3; (8) c, Acts 22:22-23; (9) c, Acts 22:20; (10) b, Acts 22:15; (11) spake, Hebrew, tongue, silence, Acts 22:2; (12) uncondemned, Roman, afraid, Acts 22:25-29; (13) devout, having, good, report, Acts 22:12; (14) martyr, Acts 22:20; (15) His, witness, seen, heard, Acts 22:15.]

VI. Lessons & Applications.

1. **...I HAVE LIVED IN ALL GOOD CONSCIENCE BEFORE GOD UNTIL THIS DAY** (Acts 23:1). *A great illustration of the FACT that "conscience" is NOT always a safe guide!* Even as Paul was persecuting **this way unto the death** (Acts 22:4), his conscience was NOT at all bothering him. He THOUGHT he was doing right!
 - 1) Saul was sincerely in error (Acts 26:9; 23:1; 22:16).
 - 2) Abimelech was sincerely in error and it ALMOST cost him his life (Gen 20:3-7).
 - 3) Uzzah was sincerely in error and it DID cost him his life (2 Sam 6:1-7).
 - 4) Multitudes are sincerely in error and it will cause them to be eternally separated and to be punished with everlasting destruction (2 Th 1:7-9).

- 5) It is **always** wrong to go against our consciences. In fact, that is one of the ways the Bible defines sin (Rom 14:23); but we must be cautious to realize that just because “it doesn’t seem wrong to me” DOES NOT necessarily mean that it is not a violation of God’s will. The word of God is **the objective standard** by which we must order our lives.
2. **AND THE HIGH PRIEST ANANIAS...** (Acts 23:2). *We have now been introduced to three men by the name of ANANIAS in the Book of Acts...*
- 1) ANANIAS of Jerusalem, the hypocritical disciple (5:1-6).
 - 2) ANANIAS of Damascus, a faithful disciple who taught Saul what he must do to be saved (9:10).
 - 3) Another ANANIAS of Jerusalem, the high priest and enemy of Paul (23:2).
3. **AND THEY CAME TO THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND ELDERS, AND SAID ... AND WE, OR EVER HE COME NEAR, ARE READY TO KILL HIM** (Acts 23:14-15). *What UGLY extreme things can be brought to when there is sufficient hatred and lack of respect for the law!* Here men are attempting to involve the chief priests and elders—effectively, the Jewish Supreme Court—in a plot to MURDER a fellow Jew.
4. **...AND WHEN PAUL’S SISTER’S SON HEARD OF THEIR LYING IN WAIT...** (Acts 23:16). *Sometimes, even in the age of miracles, God used human instrumentality in protecting His own.* While it is not certain that this is an example of God’s providential working on behalf of Paul, it surely seems to be. Especially is this true in view of the statement of Acts 23:11—**And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou has testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness all at Rome.** We are reminded of Joseph’s statement to his brothers—**But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.** His providential (non-miraculous) care of His people continues even today.
5. **...Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him** (Acts 23:16-21). *Sometimes YOUNG men bear important messages and we are wise to listen to them!* This particular young man had heard about the plot of more than forty men to kill Paul. He had the courage to bring forth that message to the one whose life was a stake. Thankfully, the chief captain was an honorable man who was willing to listen to the warning given and take preventive action to foil the plot. In the church today, leaders are wise to listen to young people. It is sometimes easy to neglect them and their peculiar needs. Leaders should not dismiss them, but rather behave as this wise chief captain did.
6. **...then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman** (Acts 23:27). *Roman citizenship came with certain blessings and privileges, as does citizenship in the kingdom of heaven.* In Philippians 3:20, Paul writes: **For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (ASV).** Every spiritual blessing is to be found IN CHRIST (Eph 1:3). Paul surely was thankful that he had the blessing of Roman citizenship when that plot to murder him was exposed; on Judgment Day all of us will be so much the more thankful to have our citizenship in heaven!!!

VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle.

A A T H E O N E P A R T W F H R I E J L
 C E C R O F Y B M I H E K A T M B V B H
 X R E H T E G O T D E D N A B J U I S V
 T S H M O R E T H A N F O R T Y E C U E
 H N O I S N E S S I D T A E R G L H N I
 E N N M G E V H M D W H U Z M X T I D V
 O O O C A C D D N A P A U Q U S S E E O
 T I S A L N D A F R P Y Q Z G R A F R H
 H T S E I E E L N C U M W N O Y C C A R
 E C R S C I V U I A A S Z U T F E A C D
 R E E A N C I A X U N P W R H C H P U Q
 H R T R U S E P W E H I O Y E E T T R G
 E R S E O N C D O M H E A P T T O A S C
 B U I A C O R L B C U U J S P L T I E T
 M S S I E C E O V V D C B B F R N N F O
 E E S G H D P T J V I I R R X I I M H T
 M R L T T O L P H A R I S E E O S K O P
 O W U R C O U M K C B O R C X V R Y H S
 R T A M R G A S A D D U C E E S E F Y J
 D Z P H B C P W O S C R A I X N I D R L

[The words (or word locaters) listed below are to be found in the text of our lesson. They also are found in the puzzle above. This is just one more way to reinforce what you have studied from the text. Why not read the whole verse where the word is found one more time as you do the puzzle? Thank you for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. Let's desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow (1 Pet 2:2). DRL]

Acts 23

the council, 1
 good conscience, 1
 Ananias, 2
 Paul perceived, 6
 the one part, 6
 Sadducees, 6
 the other, 6
 Pharisee, 6
 resurrection, 6
 great dissension, 10

chief captain, 10
 take him by force, 10
 into the castle, 10
 Rome, 11
 banded together, 12
 under a curse, 12
 more than forty, 13
 Paul's sister's son, 16
 told Paul, 16
 Caesarea, 23